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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 001056

SIPDIS

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DOE FOR CAROLYN GAY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/25/2017

TAGS: PREL NI

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: SCENESETTER FOR A/S FRAZER'S MAY 28-30
VISIT

REF: ABUJA 1020

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Classified By: Ambassador John Campbell for reasons 1.4. (b & d).

¶1. (C) U.S. Embassy Abuja warmly welcomes Assistant
Secretary of State for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer and

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Special Assistant Fatuma Sanneh, who will visit Nigeria for the May 29 presidential inauguration. Your trip comes during a time of political tension and confusion. The April 14 and 21 elections were marred by manipulation, bribery, intimidation and outright fraud. The elections have been condemned by a wide range of international and domestic observers, with many Nigerian and international groups calling for a complete re-run of the polls. The Action Congress (AC) and All Nigerian People's Party (ANPP) filed legal challenges to the presidential election on May 22, and various opposition candidates have also filed legal challenges against the announced results of other races. However, the electoral tribunals have been slow to start and confusion remains over the procedures they will follow. Still, the mood throughout the country is that something is needed to correct the electoral malpractices, and civil society and the political opposition are calling for demonstrations and protests to overturn many election results. It is likely that the election tribunals will overturn some results, and it is possible that a few successful challenges could create the momentum for additional changes.

¶2. (C) Despite rhetoric condemning the election and calling for demonstrations to bring about new polls, opposition parties, labor, and civil society have not yet brought the masses to the streets. Vice President Atiku left Nigeria in early May and has not returned. General Buhari has given mixed signals about whether he will fight the election results in the courts and he has apparently refrained from organizing any public protests. A few sporadic demonstrations and some election-related violence have occurred, despite threats by the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) to use force against demonstrators. Members of the Nigerian Bar Association boycotted the courts on May 18 and largely shut down the legal system for a day in protest, and a

consortium of labor and civil society organizations are calling for a two-day stay at home strike on May 28-29 to urge new elections. The most serious response to the elections has come from the Niger Delta, where security has deteriorated significantly, with at least two bombings of oil facilities, eight kidnappings of U.S. citizens, and numerous community confrontations in the past three weeks. The attack on the Bayelsa State House the evening before the Presidential Election followed several weeks later by the destruction of Bayelsa Governor and Vice-President-elect Goodluck Jonathan's house in his home state, allegedly by members of his own ethnic group, and continued threats of more attacks by militants in the area have lowered expectations of any quick solution to the Delta's problems.

¶3. (C) The Obasanjo government, President-designate Yar'adua, incoming officials, and the leadership of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) have refused to admit publicly that the election was seriously flawed. They acknowledge that there were some problems, but claim that critics of the polls are merely sore losers. Their public rhetoric focuses on praise for the Obasanjo administration and on the importance of the May 29 civilian-civilian transfer of power as a milestone for Nigeria. The last Federal Executive Council meeting was held on May 23, though all cabinet officers technically retain their posts until the May 29 handover. Confusion and chaos reign at the Presidential Villa and most Ministries. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for example, is a virtual ghost town. Most offices have been deserted for the past week and incumbent Minister Joy Ogwu is packing her bags and preparing to return to private life. Speculation about who will obtain key positions in the Villa and in Yar'Adua's cabinet is rampant, but mostly uninformed. It is clear that there are several circles around Yar'Adua competing for influence, and that President Obasanjo and his personal allies are still hoping to play a major role in shaping the next administration. Many people believe that Commerce Minister Modibbo will be

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the next Chief of Staff, for example, and he is certainly acting as a Chief of Staff during the transition, but Obasanjo and/or some around him are also pushing for current Chief of Staff Major-General Abdullahi Mohammed to remain on the job. Many key executive and ministerial positions may remain vacant until July or August, seriously impeding our ability to conduct even routine business with the GON.

¶4. (C) On May 24, the MFA Chief of Protocol told Poloff that the GON is not certain who will attend the inauguration from the international community. He was hopeful that the MFA would have a clearer picture by Saturday May 26. A number of African Heads of State are expected to attend, and we can confirm that Namibian President Sam Nujoma is coming. Our diplomatic colleagues in Abuja have told us that most European governments, India, Japan, and Canada will be represented at the inauguration by resident Ambassadors/High Commissioners, rather than by delegations from capitals. The British government is sending Baroness Royall, a Labour peer from the House of Lords and a party spokesperson on international affairs. The Chinese government will be represented by a Xu Jialu, the Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, who is being sent as a special envoy by President Hu Jintao. A Russian counterpart told Poloff May 24 that his country is sending an academic who serves as Russia's Special Envoy to the African Development Bank to the inauguration.

¶5. (C) You should expect that the Nigerian media will be interested in your visit and that the pro-government press will attempt to portray your presence as the U.S. government's endorsement of the new Yar'Adua administration. Yar'Adua's invitation to attend the G-8 summit in Germany has been widely portrayed in the local media as "western endorsement" of his election, despite the fact that the invitation was issued to the Nigerian president (whoever he

may be) weeks before the election. We have not arranged any media coverage of your visit, but journalists will be out in force at the inaugural events and you may also be ambushed during any meetings at the Presidential Villa.

¶6. (C) As inauguration day approaches, so too does the prospect of public confrontations and perhaps violence. Labor organizations and civil society groups have called for public activities during the two-day strike coinciding with the inauguration and other strikes in the education, energy and aviation sectors continue on a sporadic basis. A group of militants this week issued a new threat to expand activities beyond the Niger Delta, specifically to Abuja. Fuel shortages have reappeared, with lines today rivaling the worst of the fuel lines in 2003/2004. Much remains unsettled and little is likely to be clear until weeks after the handover to President-designate Yar'adua. What is clear is that opposition and civil society groups have not given up hope even as they have not mounted significant public pressure in the weeks following the April events.

CAMPBELL